

# ACMR Newsletter

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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



**Meredith Schweig**

I feel moved to begin by stating the obvious, which is that I hope this long-awaited issue of the ACMR Newsletter finds you as well as possible.

Indeed, although we are scattered across the globe, none of our lives have gone untouched by the COVID-19 crisis; many of us also live in places where urgent protest movements are currently underway. Under these circumstances, we might feel somehow more distant from our teaching and research activities. And yet, I have never been more grateful than I am right now for the sense of community that scholarship confers. I am heartened to know that we can turn to one another to share questions, concerns, and insights, and that together we can work in ways that positively impact the world around us.

This issue of the Newsletter attests to the vitality of our membership, even in these difficult times. In addition to news, announcements, and reviews, you will find in the following pages probing reports on musicians' responses to the COVID-19 crisis in Yanggao County (northeast Shanxi province) and Wuhan by Stephen Jones and Wenzhao Zhang, respectively. We also celebrate the

accomplishments of the prize winners named at our most recent meeting in Bloomington, Indiana: Adam Kielman (Rulan Chao Pian Prize), Levi S. Gibbs (Pian Prize, honorary mention), Lars Christensen (Barbara Barnard Smith Student Paper Prize), and Xiaoshan (Ilsa) Yin (Ruby Chao Yeh Prize). Since the Newsletter was on hiatus last year, we'd also like to take this opportunity to recognize prize winners from our 2018 meeting in Albuquerque, New Mexico: Bell Yung (Rulan Chao Pian Prize), Shelley Zhang (Barbara Barnard Smith Student Paper Prize), Wangcaixuan (Rosa) Zhang (Ruby Chao Yeh Prize), and Rujing Huang (Ruby Chao Yeh Prize).

As we welcome on board new editors Shuo (Niki) Yang and Matthew Haywood, I wish to convey my sincerest thanks to outgoing editors Yun Emily Wang, Lars Christensen, Elise Anderson, and Ender Terwilliger. The newsletter is a significant undertaking and a tremendous resource to our organization. It is also a community effort in the truest sense, so please consider sharing announcements and contributing any story ideas you might have.

Although many of us look ahead to the coming months with feelings of uncertainty, I hope we will think of the ACMR as a source of support and camaraderie. Best wishes to all for continued wellbeing this summer, and for continued success and happiness in all your endeavors.

Meredith Schweig

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## People and Places

► **Huan Li** successfully defended her PhD dissertation, “Gender, Creativity, and Training: Transformation of Peking Opera *Qinshi* in Contemporary China,” in Ethnomusicology from Wesleyan University.

► **Yun Emily Wang** was appointed Assistant Professor of Music at Duke University beginning Fall 2020.

► **Haiqiong Deng** has successfully defended her dissertation, “Making the Intangible Tangible: Rediscovering Music and Wellbeing Through the Guqin Culture of Modern China,” and will complete her Ph.D. in Musicology from Florida State University in Summer 2020.

► **Conference announcement:** From July 7 to 10, 2020, **the 21st Annual Meeting of the Association of Traditional Music of China** (中国传统音乐学会) will be held in the format of webinar. For updates and more information, please follow the Wechat official account of the Association of Traditional Music of China. For any questions, please contact the organizers by email: [ctyynh\\_2019@sina.com](mailto:ctyynh_2019@sina.com).

## Recent Publications

Dou, Wun. 2019. “Danao guangchanglong” 大鬧廣昌隆 [Revenge in Guang Chang Long] in *Xianggang Wenhua Guibao Xilie Zhi Ba* 香港文化瑰寶系列之八 [Hong Kong’s Cultural Treasure 8]. Two-compact disc set. Co-produced by Bell Yung and Frederick Lau; organized, and recorded by Bell Yung; CD booklet edited by Bell Yung and Sonia Ng. Hong Kong: The Chinese Music Archive of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and the Bailey Record Company.

Fung, Anthony. 2019. “Between Dislocated and Relocated Inter-Asian Popular Music Studies: Academic Discourse and Possibilities.” *Popular Music* 38 (1): 121-27.

Horlor, Samuel. 2019. “Neutralizing Temporary Inequities in Moral Status: Chinese Street Singers and the Gift Economy.” *Asian Music* 50 (2): 3-32.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2019. “Popular Song Afterlives: Oral Transmission and Mundane Creativity in Street Performances of Chinese Pop Classics.” *Journal of World Popular Music* 6 (1): 10-31.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2019. “Permeable Frames: Intersections of the Performance, the Everyday, and the Ethical in Chinese Street Singing.” *Ethnomusicology Forum* 28 (1): 3-25.

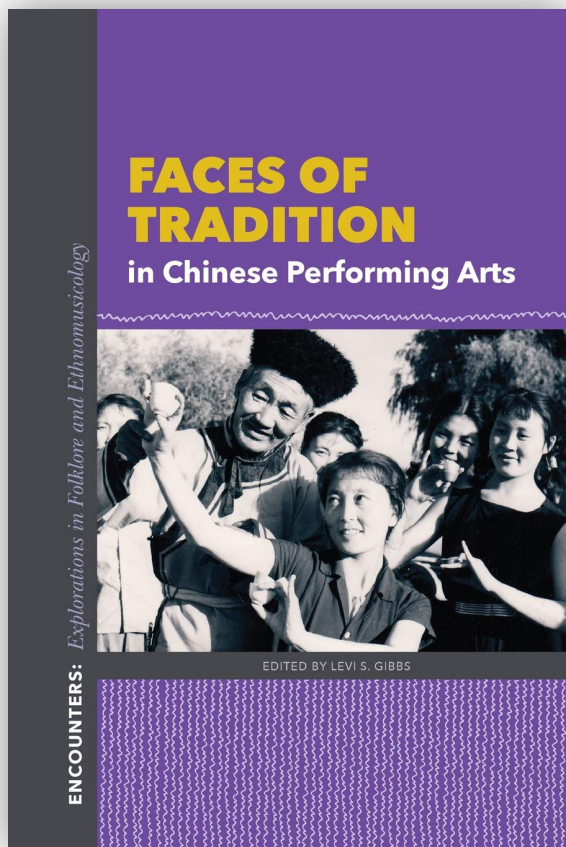
Yung, Bell. 2020. “A Heuristic Theory of Metrical Transformation and Tune Metamorphosis: Tracking Creativity in Traditional Cantonese Opera.” *Ethnomusicology* 64 (1): 110-140.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2019. “Exploring Creativity in Traditional Music.” *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 51: 1-15.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2019. “Cai Deyun laoshi qin yi fengge chutan” 蔡德允老師琴藝風格初探 [Preliminary study of the art of qin performance by Master Tsar Teh-yun]. *Yinyue Yishu* 音樂藝術 (上海音樂學院學報) [Art of Music: Journal of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music] 4: 22-28.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2019. “CHINOPERL’s Metamorphoses—Some Memories at her 50th Birthday.” *Journal of Chinese Oral and Performing Literature* 38 (1): 3-9.

## Recent Publications (cont.)



Levi S. Gibbs, ed. 2020. *[Faces of Tradition in Chinese Performing Arts](#)*. Series: Encounters: Explorations in Folklore and Ethnomusicology. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. ISBN: 978-0-253-04583-6.

*An overview of the book from the back cover:*

***Faces of Tradition in Chinese Performing Arts*** examines the key role of the individual in the development of traditional Chinese performing arts such as music and dance. These artists and their artistic works—the “faces of tradition”—come to represent and reconfigure broader fields of cultural production in China today. The contributors to this volume explore the ways in which performances and recordings, including singing competitions, textual anthologies, ethnographic videos, and CD albums, serve as discursive spaces where individuals engage with and redefine larger traditions and themselves. By focusing on the performance, scholarship, collection, and teaching of

instrumental music, folksong, and classical dance from a variety of disciplines—these case studies highlight the importance of the individual in determining how traditions have been and are represented, maintained, and cultivated.

Available in Paperback and E-Book.

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*Introduction: Faces of Tradition in Chinese Performing Arts / Levi S. Gibbs*

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*2. Chinese Singing Contests as Site of Negotiation Among Individuals and Traditions / Levi S. Gibbs*

*3. Dynamic Inheritance: Representative Works and the Authoring of Tradition in Chinese Dance / Emily E. Wilcox*

*4. Collecting Flowers, Defining a Genre: Zhang Yaxiong and the Anthology of Hua'er Folksongs / Sue Tuohy*

*5. From Field Recordings to Ethnographically Informed CDs: Curating the Sounds of Yunnan for a Niche Foreign Market / Helen Rees*

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## Recent Releases

**Winzenburg, John (conductor).**  
***Quotation of Queries: Choral Encounters of Hong Kong, China, and the Distant West.*** By Cantoría Hong Kong. Recorded June 2018. Navona Records NV6278, compact disc. Features new works in Mandarin and Cantonese as well as other world languages.

*An overview of the album from John Winzenburg:*

The student choral ensemble Cantoría Hong Kong and Conductor-

Professor John Winzenburg from the Hong Kong Baptist University Department of Music announce the release of their first CD *Quotation of Queries: Choral Encounters of Hong Kong, China, and the Distant West* for release on Navona Records (PARMA Recordings) in April 2020. The album, recorded in June 2018 at Studio 28 in Bangkok, Thailand, is available digitally at <https://navonarecords.com/catalog/nv6278/index.html>.

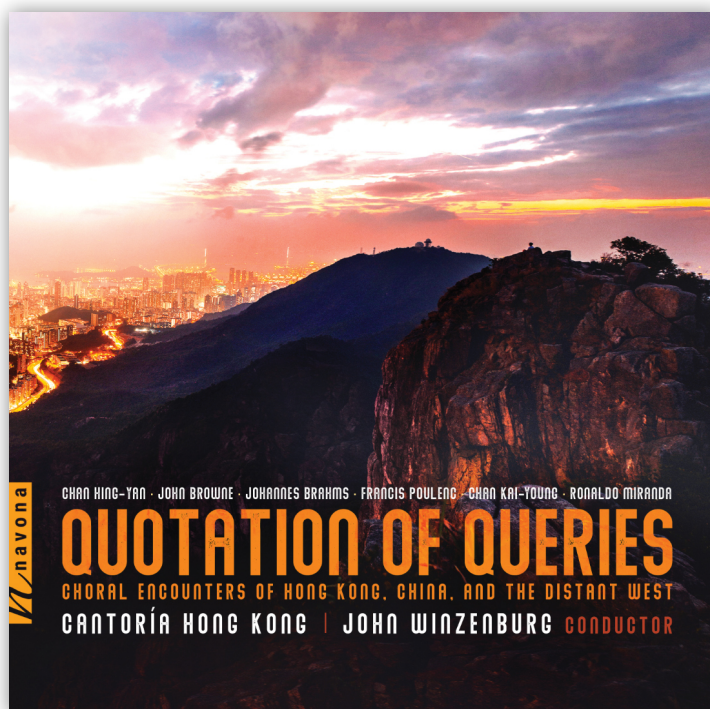
*Quotation of Queries* explores contemporary Mandarin and Cantonese choral settings of classical Chinese texts by Song Dynasty poet Su Dongpo (Su Shi) 蘇東坡 (蘇軾) in dialogue with Greek, British, German, French, and Brazilian languages and cultures from the perspective of a Hong Kong music ensemble looking outward in space and time. The collection features recent works, including three choral recording premieres, by prominent composers from Hong Kong, Brazil, and the United Kingdom. The two sets of Chinese texts are both scored for chorus and

piano. However, the music languages are highly contrasted, and the CD title track “Quotation of Queries” 蘇問 by Chan Hing-Yan is sung in Mandarin, while “Under the Mid-Autumn Moon” 水調歌頭 (Seui Diu Go Tau) and “The Crane Releasing Pavilion” 放鶴亭記 (Fong Hok Ting Kei) by Chan Kai-Young are performed in Cantonese. John Browne’s “The Suppliant Women” score combines elements of ancient Greek drama with contemporary choral theatre, as the chorus assumes the role of group protagonist in a novel partnership with percussion and the ancient Greek reed

instrument, the *aulos*. The unaccompanied “Suíte Nordestina” captures folk idioms of Brazil that are themselves amalgams of South American, African, and Portuguese forms, in which the voices sing intertwining melodies and imitate percussion instruments.

Older German and French works of

the Western choral canon also figure into this collection, including the “Zigeunerlieder” by Johannes Brahms, which were prized in 19th-century Vienna for their symbolic blending of uninhibited exotic culture and Western art music, and the “Chansons françaises” by Francis Poulenc, which offer a social commentary of French folk life. A full set of biographies, texts, translations, and liner notes for each work can be found on the CD’s online Enhanced Catalogue Page at <https://navonarecords.com/catalog/nv6278/index.html>.





## 2018-2019 Prizewinners

### 2018 Rulan Chao Pian Prize

Awarded for the best publication in Chinese music

#### **“An Audience of One: The Private Music of the Chinese Literati”**

**Bell Yung, University of Pittsburgh**

Published in *Ethnomusicology* 61(3) (2017), 506-39.

China's *qin* music is historically associated with the literati, who play primarily for themselves as a private activity. While they consider the meaning and significance of the music more important than communicating the musical sound to an audience, they nevertheless also enjoy it as expressive art. This article argues that in playing privately, the player turns

inwardly toward himself rather than outwardly toward an audience. In such a performance environment, music and musicality need to be assessed by criteria different from those commonly accepted, which are based on the supposition that music is a social activity with the primary goal of communicating to an audience.

### 2019 Rulan Chao Pian Prize

#### **“We Sing in Dialects Even as We Wander Far from Home’: Performing the Local in Polyglot Southern China”**

**Adam Kielman, Chinese University of Hong Kong**

Published in *Popular Music and Society* 42(5) (2018), 513-37.

This article investigates the intersecting aesthetic and political dimensions of the use of local dialects by an expanding cohort of musicians in southern China. Attending to processes of composition, rehearsal, performance, and listening in a polyglot cosmopolitan setting marked by uneven linguistic competencies, I suggest a framework

for understanding how the sounds of language in popular music – even when minimally understood – communicate notions of place and articulate social formations. I apply this framework to an analysis of the ways the production, circulation, and consumption of this music relate to shifting conceptions of the local in contemporary China.

## Membership Reminder

We encourage your new membership and renewal for the 2020-21 period. Current membership dues are \$15 for those in professional positions and independent scholars, and \$10 for students. Please define your status when paying. Please notify us of address and email changes. Payment can now be made through the ACMR PayPal account. If you wish to pay through this method, send

Alan Kagan a request for a PayPal invoice and currency type (e.g. Hong Kong Dollars) at [kagan001@umn.edu](mailto:kagan001@umn.edu). Otherwise, make your payment by check to ACMR and mail to:

**Alan L. Kagan, Treasurer**  
Association for Chinese Music Research  
1376 Christensen Ave.  
West St. Paul, MN 55118

## 2019 Honorable Mention for Rulan Chao Pian Prize

### “Chinese Singing Contests as Sites of Negotiation Among Individuals and Traditions”

Levi S. Gibbs, Dartmouth College

Published in *Journal of Folklore Research* 55(1) (2018), 49-75.

This article explores the function of Chinese singing competitions as “mechanisms of traditionalization” where singers, judges, and other individuals interact with and reconfigure performance traditions. Focusing on case studies of professional folksingers from northern China who became famous after appearing on national singing competitions, I argue that participating in contests not only raises the status of individual performers, but also repositions songs, singing styles, and regions within particular performance

traditions and the national mediascape as a whole. In addition, narratives of participation and success in contests sometimes connect singer-contestants to other more established singers in mutually beneficial ways. I urge us to view competitions in a singer's career as a series of liminal spaces-rather than as simple contests between individual artists-where the singer and other individuals negotiate choices between continuity and change in representing performance traditions.

## 2018 Barbara Smith Prize

Awarded for the best student paper presented at the 2017 Society for Ethnomusicology conference

### “Material Nostalgia for the Cultural Revolution Era: The Affective Practices of Revolutionary Music in Contemporary China”

Shelley Zhang, University of Pennsylvania

In this paper, I investigate the re-popularization of material culture and music from the Cultural Revolution in contemporary China. Specifically, I explore how my interlocutors from the Hunan province celebrated the Dragon Boat Festival in 2016 by visiting a former landlord's property and affectively performing music from China's Cultural Revolution. The Cultural Revolution (1966-76) was a sociopolitical movement that harshly disrupted the cultural, political, economic, and social life in the People's Republic of China. Controlled by Chairman Mao Zedong, the Revolution removed his political rivals, punished land owners, and strictly controlled musical production. Despite the drastic conditions of those days, many Chinese today are re-engaging with and even fetishizing material culture from that period. For instance, my interlocutors spent the Dragon Boat Festival, one of the PRC's few

national holidays, visiting a former landlord's property that has since been transformed into a modest museum and tourist site. Its attraction relies heavily on its ownership of Cultural Revolution relics, such as Mao Zedong portraits, Mao-themed dishware, and a stone flour mill, which tourists are welcome to use. As some of my interlocutors relived memories from the Cultural Revolution, they began performing Revolutionary music. Drawing from Svetlana Boym's seminal text, *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001), I investigate how material culture and music from the Cultural Revolution impact contemporary China's notions of nationhood, cultural transformation, and futurity. I argue that many individuals articulate their nostalgia for the Cultural Revolution era through affective consumer practices and the re-popularization of Revolutionary music.

## **2019 Barbara Smith Prize**

Awarded for the best student paper presented at the 2018 Society for Ethnomusicology conference

### **“Musical Lineage After Material Rupture: Restoring Ritual Music in the Northern Song Dynasty”**

**Lars Christensen, University of Minnesota**

Following the recent turn toward historical ethnomusicology, a few scholars have begun to consider ethnographically how discourses of music history can shape perceived historical time. However, thinking about the musical past has long been a widespread practice, and pre-modern considerations of one's place in music history can further contextualize the music-historical temporalities of extant societies. Using a close reading of historical sources, I investigate the aftermath of the loss of the Chinese imperial heirloom ritual instruments in 947. Understood materially, these ancestral instruments worked because they could invoke the spirits of those who themselves had been part of a lineage using the instruments. But without such a physical connection, scholars had to reevaluate their role in the transmission of the music of the past and determine how they could still achieve the benefits of the state ritual with new instruments. In doing so, they moved beyond the simple goal of restoring the heirlooms as they were, toward a recognition that the set had not truly been ancient and had shortcomings compared to more distant layers of a past that could now be investigated in manifold ways, through transmitted texts and images, permanencies encoded in mathematics and language, and recovered antiquities. I argue that Northern Song dynasty music specialists thought of themselves as an important historical node, recovering the true legacy of the ancients, drawing on tropes of historical rupture or decline to explain its eclipse, and passing it down in restored form for the benefit of future generations.

## **2018 Ruby Chao Yeh Prize**

Awarded for student travel to the 2018 Society for Ethnomusicology conference

### **“Passing on Compassion and Relief through Participatory Music-Making: Taiwanese Buddhist Songs at Disaster Sites”**

**Wangcaixuan (Rosa) Zhang, University of Pittsburgh**

Tzu Chi Buddhist Foundation, one of the largest Buddhist organizations in Taiwan, has been actively and successfully engaging in the discourse of international disaster reliefs for the past 25 years. Compared with other organizations, what has made Tzu Chi's disaster relief work stand out, besides the efficient and well-organized aid distributions, is its emphasis on the use of Tzu Chi Buddhist songs. How do those songs with Buddhist ideologies become a useful tool delivering relief to victims with different religious beliefs and musical tastes? Through case studies regarding the usage of Buddhist songs during Typhoon Haiyan in 2013 and at Syrian Refugees Camp in Serbian in 2016, this paper investigates how Taiwanese Buddhist songs were not only broadcast or sung but also performed on sites with participatory elements, including elementary sign language/body movements and chant-like chorus, to reconstruct the sense of community, which was key to effective recoveries. With ethnographic accounts about disaster relief experiences of both the victims and the volunteers, I argue, although the aesthetics of those Buddhist songs might not resonate sonically with all the participants, daily participatory music-making sessions—listening, singing, holding hands, hugging, and doing sign language together created multi-sensorial sensations of being cared and supported, and helped the participants to embody and pass on the message of compassion and relief in the songs through performance. I suggest that the meaning or effectiveness of those Buddhist songs does not lie in their musical characteristics or their Buddhist ideologies but how they are performed in traumatic events.



## 2018 Ruby Chao Yeh Prize

### **“Sounds of Heaven: Reconciling History, Ethnicity, and Nationhood in the Divine Music of the Qing Empire”**

**Rujing Huang, Harvard University**

This paper unfolds with a portrait of the Divine Music Administration (hereafter DMA) at the Temple of Heaven in Beijing, the imperial training institute for court musicians during the Ming and the Qing dynasties. Based on my ethnographic study of DMA’s ongoing revival program to restore the “Divine Music” of the Qing empire, this project brings to the fore the life of an institution that has otherwise been exclusively examined through a historical lens. I argue that underneath DMA’s seemingly robust revival program is brewing tension between the state-driven campaign in China to restore its traditional culture and the contentious historiography of the Qing dynasty, a Manchu empire. At issue, here, is the increasingly nuanced inter-ethnic politics between China’s dominant Han majority and its ethnic minorities. I then go on to build a case for rethinking the dialectic between music as a divine creation and its efficacy as a mundane, political instrument. At a time when narratives concerning China’s ancient past become increasingly important in shaping its political present, a re-evaluation of music—a crucial player to empower this re-constructed past—becomes all the more valuable. Throughout, I place my work in dialogue with ethnomusicological writings on the role of music in negotiating ethnic and national identities, and with sinological discourses on the Chinese empire. I also engage existing scholarship on musical tourism, nationalism, and the politics of musical meaning.

## 2019 Ruby Chao Yeh Prize

Awarded for students travel to the 2019 Society for Ethnomusicology conference

### **“Negotiation between Tradition and Transformation: Semiotic Ideology of the Notation System of the *Guqin*”**

**Xiaoshan (Ilsa) Yin, University of Maryland, College Park**

The *guqin* (*qin* for short) is a Chinese 7-string zither with a history of at least two thousand years. The instrument and its music was proclaimed by UNESCO as a Masterpiece of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2003. In the contemporary process of reconstructing the tradition, the notation system has been playing an important role. As a symbolic system, a notation system represents certain musical and extra-musical ideas. This paper explores the semiotics of different notation systems. It argues that different notation systems used for the *qin* reflect different semiotic ideologies of people (Keane 2003), and that among the practitioners, changes in notation systems reflect changes in

people’s ideologies of the instrument and its music.

Scholars have conducted musicological research on the traditional tablature of the *qin* and historical research on Chinese culture and philosophy affiliated to the instrument. However, few have paid particular attention to the discursive role that the notation plays in the process of reconstructing the tradition, nor has any scholar tried to examine different notation systems from a semiotic perspective. It is a hope of this paper to provide a semiotic approach to the ethnomusicological study of the *qin* and other instruments that concern scholars with both tradition and transformation.

## Stephen Jones: a Blog

The UK-based scholar of Chinese rural ceremonial music **Stephen Jones**, maintains a wide-ranging blog ([www.stephenjones.blog](http://www.stephenjones.blog)) on musical and cultural topics, which he summarizes as “Daoism—language — performance. And jokes.” It can be accessed via [www.stephenjones.blog](http://www.stephenjones.blog).

His site began as an introduction to his work with Li Manshan and Li's late great father Li Qing and the household Daoists of Yanggao county in north China, but it eventually expanded into (in the author's words) “my usual crazed ramblings on a variety of more-or-less related topics (...) I seem to be discovering a taste for arcane and unlikely links between all manifestations of the Terpsichorean muse.

However jocular, such connections seem necessary in these fractured insular times—building bridges, not walls.”

Apart from the [Li family](#) Daoists (notably, a detailed documentary [film](#), and successive series on the family's 2017 French tour and Jones' 2018 fieldwork—summary [here](#)), among other topics are:

- the [Hebei ritual associations](#) (including [Gaoluo](#))
- a whole host of articles under [local ritual](#)
- reflections on [fieldwork](#) and [Maoism](#), including posts on the great [Yang Yinliu](#) (tag [here](#))
- many trenchant critiques of the heritage shtick
- tributes to [Antoinet Schimmelpenninck](#), [Robert van Guliak](#), and [Věna Hrdličková](#)
- the [guqin](#)
- [Western Art Music](#) (Bach, Mahler, Ravel, and ethnography, including Jones' orchestral life)
- many posts on [modern European culture and politics](#), suggesting Chinese parallels
- a series on [musical cultures of imperial north China](#) and [amateur entertainment musicking](#)
- and essays on [gender](#), jazz, pop, punk, and world music (all with their own tags in the sidebar).

There are generous lashings of jokes (including Chinese jokes), and enticing photos and maps.

For a detailed analytical comparison of a *qin* piece and a shawm suite, see [Dissolving boundaries](#). The categories and tags in the sidebar also feature a playlist, including a startling rendition of the [Goldberg variations](#) on *erhu* and *sanxian* (for more on Chinese fiddles, see [here](#)).



**Steve continues to post vignettes related to the film, and updates—like [this](#), on the Li family Daoists' response to Coronavirus, fourth in a series:**

### Coronavirus 4: Household Daoists in Shaanxi

In recent years, as the wonderful [Li Manshan](#) has begun to take things easier in his eighth decade, his son [Li Bin](#), working since 2007 from the base of his funeral shop in the county-town, has been worked off his feet (for their busy diaries, see [here](#) and [here](#); and for the tough life of the household Daoist, [here](#)). Not only does he book and lead a band to perform funeral rituals throughout the villages, but he has to organise every stage of the mortuary procedure from death to burial—as well as making routine individual consultations to “determine the date” for weddings, health, journeys, selecting auspicious sites for new buildings, and so on.

## Coronavirus 4 (cont.)



*Li Bin's funeral shop in Yanggao town.*

kaigu 开鼓), as is normally *de rigueur*. So regular members of the Daoist sextet like [Wu Mei](#) and [Li Sheng](#), normally busy reciting the scriptures with wind and percussion for the sequence of rituals they perform for funerals over two (sometimes three) days, now find themselves temporarily unemployed. [Golden Noble](#), another core member of the band who leads the [vocal liturgy](#), can perform the solo mortuary procedures like determining the date, siting graves, and supervising the burial, so he has picked up a bit of work in the immediate vicinity of his home township Houying.

One accomplished Daoist who has only rarely been able to appear with the ritual group since seeking work as a migrant labourer in 2004 is Li Qing's nephew [Erqing](#). Whereas the other Daoists are active over a small radius, his work has taken him over a large area of north and south China. He has been an important member of our [foreign tours](#). Like Gansu singer [Zhang Gasong](#) and countless others, since returning home for New Year he has found himself exiled there.



*Erqing (right) with Wu Mei, funeral 2009.*

Despite the crisis, Yanggao didn't go into total lockdown. Remarkably, Li Bin is still in considerable demand, individually, to meet people's routine needs for mortuary procedures; indeed, he is just as busy as ever—the boss continuing to prosper as the workers are laid off?! Few customers have been venturing out to his funeral shop, but he fields constant messages on his smartphone. So he is still called out constantly, driving throughout the countryside but now having to pass through a

Since the Coronavirus scare, strict measures have been in place in north Shanxi, though no cases seem to have been reported there. Many neighbourhoods in Datong city were sealed; in Yanggao town the gated communities monitored all activity. Restaurants and schools have been closed. For a change, there are no traffic jams at the crossroads just north of Li Bin's funeral shop (my [film](#), from 4.17).

Wedding festivities are on hold, and bereaved families are not currently allowed to invite Daoists or [shawm bands](#) to perform group funeral rituals (known as “opening the drum”



## Coronavirus 4 (cont.)

laborious series of checkpoints on the main roads and at the entrance to every village, where temperatures are taken and all movements registered. Li Bin's work is considered a legitimate cause for such journeys.



*Checkpoints in Yanggao, February 2020. Photos: Li Bin.*

In these [poor villages that are depleted yearly](#) by urban migration, with the population ageing, conditions of hygiene may have improved since around 2000, but remain far from ideal (for earlier epidemics in Yanggao, see [here](#)). Routine burials still need to be held—though currently by the immediate family alone, with one single Daoist carrying out the necessary procedures (see my [Daoist priests of the Li family](#), pp.185–200).

After a death, the immediate task is to summon Li Bin to use his almanacs to determine the date for the burial—which may vary, as usual, from around five days to over a month. Then he has to write the placard announcing the death (*yangzhuang* 殃狀), supervise the encoffinement, and provide [mourning clothes for the kin](#) as well as the [paper artefacts](#) (which he and his wife make at their shop) to be displayed and eventually burned at the grave; he has to decorate the coffin, write the tomb tile, depict talismans to be pasted up at the house of the deceased, and [choose an auspicious fengshui site for the grave](#), using his *luopan* compass to determine its position and alignment. All these tasks are shown in my [film](#), and even over this stressful period Li Bin still continues to perform them constantly.



*Left: reverse side of tomb tile; right, talismans.  
My photos, 2011.*

## Coronavirus 4 (cont.)

Even in normal times some very poor families, unable to afford the elaborate funerary rituals of the full band, have long requested a single Daoist to preside over a simplified burial ritual (known as “settling the burial” *anzang* 安葬). During the current crisis this has become routine. Mostly it only takes an hour or two, though even now some families expect a rather longer ritual.



*Li Manshan: decorating a coffin (2015), and exorcising the house (2013).*

Just before the coffin is raised out of the central room of the deceased’s home (my [film](#), from 1.16.31), the Daoist—now wearing a face-mask in addition to his red costume and *yinyang* hat — exorcises the rooms by wielding a sheaf of *gaoliang* stalks and a cleaver, knocking them against the lintels and silently reciting the mantra *Qiyang zhou* 起殃咒. Then, as the coffin-bearers raise the coffin out of the house, the Daoist uses his cleaver to smash a food-bowl on the floor at the entrance to the room, marking the end of the son’s duties to feed his parent; indeed, “smashing the bowl” is the term commonly used to describe the whole simplified burial ritual. As he does so, the Daoist silently recites another mantra, the *Zhanpen zhou* 斩盆咒. These two mantras for dangerous liminal moments serve to protect the Daoist himself.\*

Li Bin then accompanies the coffin through the fields to the grave he has chosen, and fine-tunes its alignment in the grave. After returning to the house he performs a further brief exorcism there. He then hurries off to other villages help more bereaved families.

Again, I note the adaptability of the “old rules”; in times of crisis, rituals can be simplified, yet a proper commemoration of grief is still needed. In Li Bin’s notebook he keeps a careful record of all his daily work, noting the precise date and time of death, details of the birth dates of the deceased and their sons and grandsons, the location of the grave, and the date that he determined for the burial.

Li Bin’s father Li Manshan too has to respond to the requests of his local clients, zooming round on his motorbike to determine the date, choose burial plots, and smash bowls. Sure, all this is their livelihood; but like their forebears right back to the 18th century, they are like parish priests, “serving the people”—a cliché now commonly used with a rather satirical edge, but in this case true. Meanwhile [elsewhere in Yanggao](#), in neighbouring counties (see my other posts on Shanxi under [local ritual](#)), and doubtless further afield, other Daoists too will be continuing to meet the needs of their rural clients.



## Coronavirus 4 (cont.)

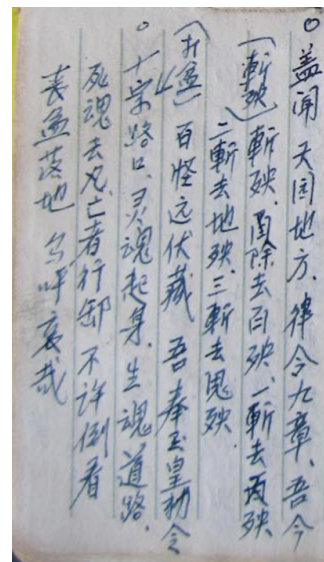
By 23rd February, with no new cases of the virus reported in Yanggao, roadside checks were easing and officials were only monitoring travellers' temperatures, not registering their details. I wonder how long it will take for the more elaborate funeral rituals to be restored, with the other Daoists joining Li Bin in performing the full sequence of vocal liturgy, accompanied by wind and percussion.

### Update

Indeed, since late February the full ritual sequence has been restored, with Li Bin booking the whole Daoist band to perform funerals; but since he has still been busy doing all the solo mortuary tasks, only on 5th April could he lead his group for the first time since the lockdown, "opening the drum" at a funeral in Upper Liangyuan.

\* Though the texts of these two silent mantras don't appear in any of the Li family's surviving ritual manuals, Li Manshan eventually found them for me in his little blue pocket-book, which he copied in the 1980s from a similar notebook of his late great father Li Qing (for whom, see e.g. [here](#), and, for his ritual manuals, [here](#)).

Seeking instruction with Li Manshan one day, I joked that I had learned them, "reciting" them for him, lips firmly closed—providing us with another creative topos (e.g. in [France](#)).



## Tonight, We Are All Wuhan-ers: Reimagining Urban Subjectivities, Space, and Music Healing

Wenzhao Zhang, Chinese University of Hong Kong

With at least 1,632,898 confirmed cases worldwide and a death toll of 97,595 in over 200 countries and territories (as of April 10th 2020), the coronavirus pandemic has resulted in severe global socioeconomic disruption. Wuhan, as the first epicentre, had been subjected to strict quarantine from January 23rd to April 8th. Aside from physical isolation, over 9 million Wuhan residents, together with the floating population, have been confronted with horrors and anxieties of potential health problems, economic uncertainty, and geographic discrimination.

As a Wuhan local and ethnomusicologist, my on-going dissertation project on independent popular music in Wuhan has been interrupted suddenly by the coronavirus disease. Feeling empathetic and obligated, I determined to observe, record, and respond to music-related activities in Wuhan within the 76-day quarantine and after. Music and sound broadly have played and continue to play vital roles in preventing and healing not only damage to bodily health, but also emotional and spiritual suffering. My central concern lies in how music and sound reflect and mediate people's feelings towards trauma, one-another, and themselves during the outbreak.



## *Tonight, We Are All Wuhan-ers (cont.)*

The most ear-catching type of music during the coronavirus outbreak should be the anti-coronavirus songs (*kangyi gequ* 抗疫歌曲). In mainland China, most anti-coronavirus songs are propaganda music which were composed and produced within a very short time. Despite some unofficial songs, most *kangyi gequ*, however, were affiliated with certain institutions such as the China Federation of Literature and Art Circles, regional television and radio channels, and conservatories of music, to name a few. Even though the majority of them are themed with “Hang in There, Wuhan” (*Wuhan jiaoyou* 武汉加油), Wuhan residents, from my personal field experience, cannot easily resonate with these delicate songs. One of the most controversial anti-coronavirus children songs, “How Magic is the Cabin Hospital” (*Fangcang yiyuan zhen shenqi* 方舱医院真神奇), composed by several Hunan composers and writers, has been harshly attacked for compelling an eleven-year-old schoolboy to wear inopportune thick makeup and sing out jubilant tunes and lyrics wearing a performative, stylized, exaggerated fake smile. One composer, Jiang Junrong 蒋军荣, had to respond that “netizens did not understand us well... This song intends to express a positive attitude, and please do not put misery on to children.”



*Screen capture from the music video “How Magic is the Cabin Hospital.”*



*Yoga training in the cabin hospital*

[https://m.baidu.com/sf\\_baijiahao/s?id=1659146147952438620&wfr=spider&for=pc](https://m.baidu.com/sf_baijiahao/s?id=1659146147952438620&wfr=spider&for=pc).

But what sorts of music do Wuhan residents, especially patients, resonate with? As depicted in the song “How Magic is the Cabin Hospital,” the soundscapes in cabin hospitals are intertwined and interesting. Since the majority of patients there had only slight symptoms, medical staff, as well as volunteers, paid attention to their mental health in addition to their physical recovery. Various music and sounds were intentionally applied to mediate their feelings and emotions. Online professional music therapy platforms were recommended and applied in hospitals, such as the Wechat Mini Program The Voice of Cabin Hospitals collectively launched

by the Third Affiliated Hospital, Sun Yat-sen University, and People’s Music Publishing House. Yoga, traditional Chinese qigong, and sound meditation were also taught in their sickbeds and

## *Tonight, We Are All Wuhan-ers (cont.)*

shared spaces. However, according to several volunteers, the effect was limited since the environment was too noisy and anxious patients felt resistant to following instructions. More significantly, nurses and volunteers organized a series of interactive music-related activities, including yoga and sound meditation, choral singing, online music concerts, and the most favoured, public square dancing (*guangchang wu* 广场舞). Through dancing and singing as a group in an unfamiliar public space, patients eased their uneasy feelings and re-established trust and intimacy toward each other.

A handful of anti-coronavirus protest songs have been composed, although only very few of them can be heard online due to strict censorship. “A Short Song on the Epidemic” (*yiqing xiaochang* 疫情小唱) by Gansu-based folk artist Zhang Gasong 张尕怂 touches upon critical topics including the Red Cross credibility crisis, buying out Chinese medicine *shuanghuanglian* 双黄连, murdering pet cats, medical privilege, and so on. Interestingly, he chose to sing through a “rustic” dialect in an absurd tone along with the traditional instrument *sanxian* 三弦, rather than perform in an intellectual tone. Another folk song, “Hanyang Gate Garden” (*Hanyangmen huayuan* 汉阳门花园) composed by Wuhan local songwriter Feng Xiang 冯翔 has been frequently heard and covered. As a Wuhan dialect song, “Hanyang Gate Garden” meticulously depicts an old picture of passed childhood days with the Wuhan landmark, recalling the common memories and nostalgic feelings of the city. Through listening to and singing along with this sentimental song, as well as other local music, Wuhan residents are untied from grand narratives such as “Wuhan is a city of heroes” and gradually reconstruct a strong sense of regional imagination, belonging, and pride in being Wuhan-ers through daily experience.

My on-going project will continue to observe the nuanced urban subjectivities of Wuhan residents after the 77 days of mandatory quarantine. The main research question lies in how music and sound broadly contribute to the bodily health and mental well-being of Wuhan residents and migrate populations under severe social inequalities such as regional bias and infectious disease discrimination. Drawing upon our experiences of music healing, my friends and I are curating a series of music activities such as online music concerts, yoga and sound meditation, and memorial ceremonies to help more people in need. But are middle and above-scale live performances available in the foreseeable future in Wuhan? If not, what alternative form can be mostly accepted and identified?

I’d also like to share some of my field experience. First, since I was outside of Wuhan during the long period of city isolation, I felt distant from the field site both geographically and emotionally. Disappointingly, I have to admit much information and work has been missed due to the unavoidable physical distance. Luckily though, as a Wuhan-er who has been settled down in my friend’s place far away from the epicentre, my work has benefitted from both insiders’ perspectives and outsiders’ feelings. As a Wuhan resident, I experience an insider’s crazy anxieties and homesickness. As a physical outsider, I get a sense of the broader picture of how the government, other Chinese individuals, and the rest of the world feel about Wuhan and Wuhan people. I started to make use of my connections and make frequent video calls with my familiar artist friends and unfamiliar potential informants to observe their musical expression and life conditions when troubled with bodily feelings, emotional fluctuation, and uncertain news.

## *Tonight, We Are All Wuhan-ers (cont.)*

Last but not least, I have long been troubled with one ethical problem of affecting the decision-making of my informants. However, when confronted with extreme trauma such as the coronavirus outbreak, that seems no longer an issue. I almost determined to do applied jobs in a blink of an eye, because as a human, I was obligated to lend a hand. Then the next question lies, how should I behave as a well-trained ethnomusicologist? What do us ethnomusicologists contribute to the world under the coronavirus pandemic broadly?

## **Report on Final Presentations of a Fieldwork and Ethnographic Writing Seminar in Shanghai Conservatory**

**Shuo (Niki) Yang, University of Pittsburgh**

There is no better way for students to have an online seminar on fieldwork methods and ethnography than by developing their own virtual ethnographic projects. Especially during the current pandemic crisis, to examine how the coronavirus has changed musical life, how people interact musically under these special circumstances, and what music is to people in a time of crisis becomes particularly meaningful.

On April 30, 2020, master's students of the Fieldwork and Ethnographic Writing Seminar taught by Professor Xiao Mei in Shanghai Conservatory conducted via Zoom their final presentations that were open to the public. Throughout a semester of online courses, seven groups of students from different majors developed virtual ethnographic projects on the theme of "COVID-19 and musical life" (疫情与音乐生活), conducted virtual fieldwork, and shared their projects with the public.

The topics chosen by the seven groups were diverse. The first group (Ma Chengcheng, Huang Wei, Zhang Siyu) focused on the different "voices" of Weibo users regarding music composed for COVID-19 and related musical activities around the world, showcasing people's varied attitudes and focal interests on the power of music during the pandemic.



*Group one's project poster.*



*Group two's project poster.*



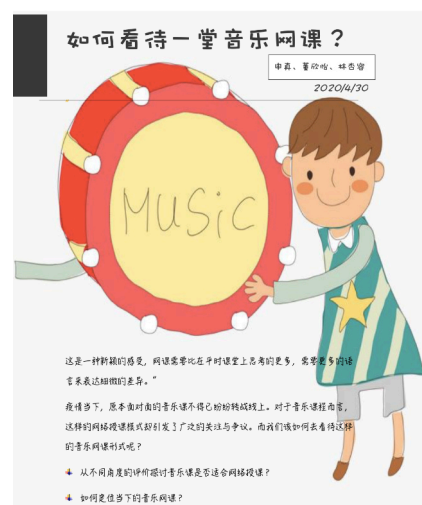
## Report on Final Presentations (cont.)

The second group (Yu Chenyao, Li Yihui, Du Xueyan, Ling Yu, Shen Yirong, Xiao Chu) took Tan Dun's new work *12: Prayer and Blessing* (武汉十二钹), a piece in support of people who suffer from COVID-19, and the high-tech virtual performance of this work on April 12, 2020 as their departure point. They looked at the various promotional strategies of this project through online platforms and the sponsorship of a major corporation, Buick, and as such explored new possibilities of commercialization in contemporary music.

Through analyzing virtual platforms for music learning, such as online music classes in school and using a mobile app to practice with a partner, and by conducting virtual interviews with music teachers, students, and parents, group three (Shen Zhen, Lin Xingrong, Dong Xinyi) discussed the reception, value, and limitations of online music teaching.



Left: group three's project poster;  
Right: group four's project poster.



During the pandemic of COVID-19, students and faculty members of Shanghai Conservatory have created music in different genres dedicated to the battle against the coronavirus. Group four (Wang Junyu, Xu Heguan, Chen Wenjing, Li Yujie) conducted virtual interviews with these music creators and sent out questionnaires on WeChat, presenting a meaningful oral history project documenting this special period of time.

Group five (Zhang Yi, Luo Hanqi, You Ying, Cao Ran) is interested in the new phenomenon of virtual clubbing (云蹦迪) in Chinese urban youth culture. As clubbing businesses have been suspended, this group analyzed the transition of young people's clubbing activity from offline to online, changes in consumer behavior, and new cultural symbols that have emerged from these transformations.

Stemming from six small case studies, group six (Cao Yijia, Gu Yunfan, He Liu, Li Wenxuan) explored the broader effect of music on people and how different interpretations people give to music reflect their social identities.



Group five's project poster.

Last but not least, group seven (Zhang Zhihui, Ren Yueci, Zang Yameng, Wang Yingying)

## Report on Final Presentations (cont.)

concentrated on a video that went viral on the internet, in which residents under quarantine in Wuhan were “shouting” the Chinese national anthem and other red songs (红歌) from their balconies. Adopting a method that included a questionnaire and virtual interviews, this group discussed the symbolic meaning of the “balcony” as a site of creating collective identity, as a “performing stage”, and as a social platform.



Left: group six's project poster;  
right: group seven's project poster.



## Exhibition Report: “The Moon Represents My Heart: Music, Memory and Belonging” at the Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA)

Meredith Schweig, Emory University

“The Moon Represents My Heart: Music, Memory and Belonging” ran from May 2nd to September 29th, 2019 at the Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA), located on the outskirts of New York City’s Chinatown neighborhood. Organized by Hua Hsu (staff writer at *The New Yorker* and director of Vassar’s American Studies program), Herb Tam (MOCA’s Curator and Director of Exhibitions), and Andrew Rebatta (MOCA’s Associate Curator), the exhibition examined music as an essential force shaping lives and livelihoods in



Photo credit: Meredith Schweig

Sinophone communities in the United States.

A large, exuberantly pink placard greeted visitors to MOCA’s intimate gallery space, with an evocative introductory text that asked: “Is your radio always tuned to the same station? Are you a mixtape of different sounds and voices?” Following this, museumgoers navigated a series of small, tightly curated displays that limned the connections between *xiqu* and hip-hop, Asian American Movement music and Beijing underground rock, and karaoke and church singing, among other things. Together, the opening questions and the layout of the space invited reflection on the complex relationships of individuals and communities to music, without recourse to strict chronologies or rigid conceptions of geography. “By free-associating in this way,” the curatorial team wrote, “we hope the exhibition will prompt you to actively explore



how music, memory, and belonging are connected.”



*Photo credit: Meredith Schweig*



*Photo credit: Meredith Schweig*

In this vein, the figure of Taiwan-born Teresa Teng (鄧麗君), whose 1977 recording of “The Moon Represents My Heart” (月亮代表我的心) inspired the title of the exhibition, was present less as an object of study than as an emblem of diasporic experience. Label texts lingered on her particular significance to listeners in immigrant communities, for whom she represented a pointed and poignant sense of homeland-longing. Videos of Teng outfitted in lavish costumes, singing sweetly, looped on a screen that was positioned high up and towards the far end of the gallery. Thus situated, the singer appeared to survey the diverse musical worlds below, which were animated by listening and viewing stations, as

well as by artifacts of material culture, including records, cassettes, concert posters,



*Photo credit: Meredith Schweig*

and musicians’ personal relics.

Although the musical traditions under examination were wide-ranging in time and space, the exhibition was, to this visitor, most powerful when it plumbed the sources most proximal to MOCA. A display dedicated to Toisanese *muk’yu* artist and Chinatown fixture Ng Sheung Chi juxtaposed with black-and-white photographs of 1960s Motown-inspired local girl group “The Fortune Cookies” threw into sharp relief music’s capacity to mediate between and produce diverse immigrant identities in New York. Likewise, placards like those chronicling the work of Queens-based Latin freestyle performer Leonard Liao and Manhattan-based DJ/producer Daniel Wang drew attention to figures who have received scant attention in either scholarship or popular media.

At the center of the exhibition, a stage created space for evening performances, listening sessions, DJ nights, as well as a concert named “Experiments in Noise” which featured local interdisciplinary sound artists Charmaine Lee, C. Spencer Yeh, and Daren Ho. Activities such as these no doubt encouraged the formation not only of new artistic works, but also of new memories and community bonds for the next generation.



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## Upcoming Conferences

### 1st Official Symposium of the ICTM Study Group on Global History of Music

November 16-18, 2020.

Sichuan Conservatory of Music, China

<http://ictmusic.org/group/global-history-music>

### 49th Annual Mid-Atlantic Region Association for Asian Studies Conference

October 2-4, 2020

Villanova University

<https://maraas.org/>

### 21th Annual Meeting of the Association of Traditional Music of China (中国传统音乐学会)

July 7-10, 2020

Webinar

<http://www.cctmusic.org.cn/>

## About ACMR

The Association for Chinese Music Research (ACMR) serves as a forum for the exchange of ideas and information for anyone interested in the scholarly study of Chinese music. Catering mainly though not exclusively to those living in North America, ACMR holds an annual meeting in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology.

ACMR's online discussion group is hosted by the University of Hawai'i. To send messages to the list, please use the address [acmr-l@lists.hawaii.edu](mailto:acmr-l@lists.hawaii.edu). If you have any questions about the list, write to Ted Kwok at [tedk@hawaii.edu](mailto:tedk@hawaii.edu).

ACMR Newsletter is published twice a year in spring and fall. We encourage ACMR members to submit the following kinds of materials: notices of recent publications and recently completed dissertations or theses, announcements of and reports on scholarly and performing activities, news of institutions and individuals, as well as views and opinions on any matter relevant to ACMR. Please send all materials and enquiries to [ACMRnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:ACMRnewsletter@gmail.com). Back issues are available at <http://acmr.info/>.